

# Moscow assignment offers Team NASA members excitement, opportunity

By John Ira Petty

There are some differences, cultural and professional. Moscow traffic can be frightening and Russian colleagues in the International Space Station Program may have their own ideas about how to work to achieve the common goal.

But those differences make Russia an exciting and professionally rewarding assignment for NASA and contractor personnel.

Mike Baker, JSC assistant director for Human Space Flight Programs in Russia (HSFR), is head of NASA activities in the country. His deputy, Tom Cremins, occupies Baker's old office on the ninth floor of Bldg. 1, providing an effective liaison with JSC officials and illustrating the importance of Russia to NASA leadership.

Baker has been in Russia in his present job since January 1998. "Basically," he said, "anything that has to do with Russia and JSC comes under my organization. This is like a mini-JSC ... in terms of the spectrum of things we deal with."

Baker is a Navy captain and astronaut with four space flights to his credit. The most recent was STS-81 in January 1997, the fifth mission to the Russian space station Mir. During Phase I of the ISS Program, he also served as director of operations, Russia, an astronaut position at the Star City training facility outside Moscow.

Like the ISS Program and the cooperation between the U.S. and Russian space programs, the NASA organization in Russia has matured. There is better communication and cooperation among various NASA and contractor elements in Russia and better coordination in their support from the United States.

The number of NASA and contractor people in Russia varies, depending on what is going on. Recently about 130 Americans were assigned to jobs in and around Moscow. The number had grown

substantially with the influx of people for the Joint Progress Review and the General Design Review in April, then declined to more normal levels.

Dave Lengyle is Baker's deputy in Moscow, as well as being head of the Moscow Technical Liaison Office, which follows Russian hardware being built for the ISS. That is one of four major offices in Moscow Baker identifies as part of HSFR.

The others are a business and logistics office under Lee Pagel, the Houston Support Group at Mission Control Center Moscow (MCCM) under an operations lead, recently Patti Moore, and the crew training organization at Star City headed by astronaut Joe Edwards, filling Baker's old job. Edwards was pilot of STS-89, the eighth shuttle Mir docking, in January 1998.

"Our NASA function here is to act as a liaison with our Russian counterparts in human space flight," Baker said.

That's the bottom line, and Baker does a lot of it himself. He has built on relationships established during his stay at Star City and MCCM. He tries to visit Russian counterparts in various Russian organizations at least once a week to further develop those ties.

It's hard to overestimate the importance of personal relationships in Russia. Ernie R. Edge Jr., a facilities engineer at MCCM who works for United Space Alliance is responsible for seeing that U.S. flight controllers at MCCM have the hardware they need to do their jobs. He recounted earlier experiences while he was on his third tour of duty in Moscow.

"When I first got here, you found out pretty quickly that the Russians didn't want to work with you professionally until they knew you on some type of personal level," he said. Tea was one tool.

After arriving at work at MCCM on that first tour, Edge and colleagues typically would spend an hour or so drinking tea with Russian counterparts just to chat, to get to know one another. What



Russian dolls with porcelain heads and hands are among the many attractive souvenirs available to shoppers in Moscow.

seemed then a waste of time turned out to be valuable trust-building that helped him do his job. They still get together occasionally to keep relationships current.

Language and cultural differences are challenges off the job, too. Anyone who wants to draw maximum benefit from a tour in Russia has to make an effort to learn some Russian. The food is different, although for those open to new experiences that can be a plus. Few Americans have cars, but the Moscow Metro system makes it easy and inexpensive to get around. "I wish we had something like it in Houston," Edge said.

Moore, the MCCM operations lead, was on her seventh trip to Moscow. Her longest stay was four months during Phase I. She still enjoys being here.

"You learn a lot living in a different culture – it broadens your whole life experience." Professionally, "I like working with Russians. I like doing jobs that I feel are important, and I feel that this is important. I get a lot of personal satisfaction out of helping this interface go well," Moore said.

Baker said he believes there will be opportunities for NASA and contractor personnel in Russia for a long time to come. "That's one reason we called it HSFR. Hopefully, it reflects other human space flight programs we and Russia can do together – eventually, perhaps, the moon and Mars." ■

## Tech-Trans helps Team NASA people function, feel at home in Moscow

NASA and contractor employees in Russia have a lot of dealings with Tech-Trans International. It provides housing, transportation and translation services.

Its people also provide individual aid and comfort that go beyond the letter of TTI's NASA contract – things like local knowledge and advice, and even lending a bewildered new arrival a few rubles for the required passport registration fee at the Volga hotel/apartments.

Over the past 18 months or so, the NASA/contractor presence in Moscow has grown from a dozen leased apartments at the Volga to 40. Eight vans in Moscow and half a dozen in Star City move people around.

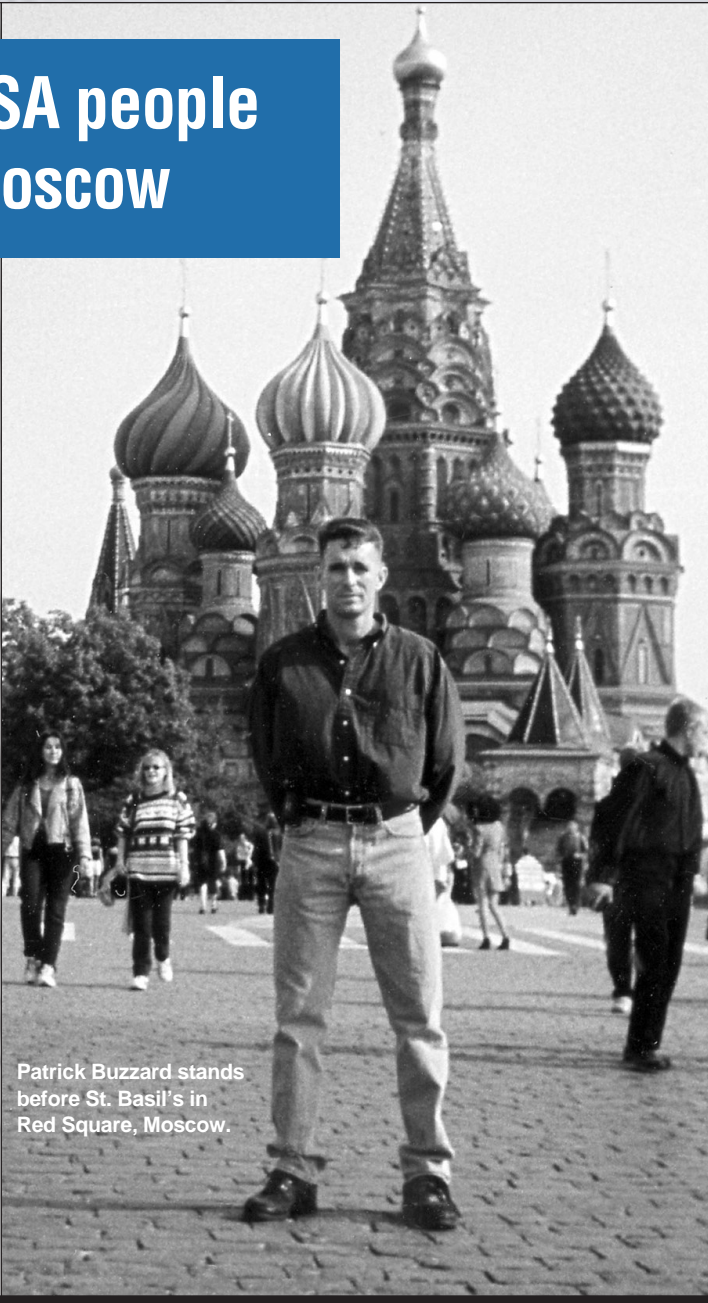
Patrick Buzzard is a TTI supervisor and one of two Americans from that company with the NASA operation in Russia. The other U.S. TTI supervisor in Moscow is Jane D. Williams. Natasha Doroshenko manages TTI operations in Star City, about 40 miles from Moscow.

Alex Krukhov is TTI vice president of operations for Russia. His responsibilities include the more than 40 Russian TTI employees, and a pool of contractor employees.

Buzzard believes further growth in the U.S. presence in Russia is likely as the International Space Station Program gains momentum.

"Being in Moscow," said Buzzard, who spent four years at the University of Houston, four years in the Marine Corps and then earned an MBA at Texas A&M before joining TTI last year, "is something I never dreamed I'd be doing a few years ago. It's good to see a peace dividend, to see us working together."

Buzzard came to Moscow last summer and continues Russian language studies begun in Houston. ■



Patrick Buzzard stands before St. Basil's in Red Square, Moscow.